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NEWSWEEK

ENTERPRISE:

Count This Greek, Too

To the list of such golden Greeks as Aristotle, Socrates, Onassis and Stavros Niarchos, a new name should be added: Nicolas Reisini.

His odyssey began in Athens 55 years ago; it has come to rest, temporarily at least, in a twentieth-floor office off New York's Fifth Avenue. Along the way, Reisini has built his privately held Robin International Inc. into an amalgam of mining, movies, exports, imports, foreign exchange, and finance whose annual business, by his estimate, runs between \$150 million and \$200 million a year.

Last week, for the first time, Reisini ventured into the limelight of a publicly held company. He bought a 13 per cent interest in the 114-year-old \$33 million fabric firm of Collins & Aikman.

Ships for Sugar: Though Reisini has the flair of an international operator—transoceanic telephoning, commuting in Europe—he prefers to operate on the private side. Typical was a deal this year for an \$86 million Cuban shipyard.

This vast project got started when Dr. Joaquín Martínez Saenz, head of the island's national bank, asked Reisini to find someone who would build (and help finance) ships to tote sugar under the Cuban flag. (No stranger, Reisini had sold Cuba its first Viscount turbo-prop in 1955.) For the next year, he shuttled between Havana and London, lining up four British shipbuilding firms. Construction is set to get under way later this year (at Matanzas, west of Havana) and the first 25 ships that result, Dr. Saenz figures, should cut a third from Cuba's annual \$60 million freight bill. Reisini's share: A Robin International investment in the new Cuban-British firm and a seat on its board.

The international touch comes naturally to Reisini. Born in Greece, he finished high school in Danzig, went on to Heidelberg and Paris's Sorbonne. He got his business start managing coal mines in Manchuria which he inherited from his grandfather, soon was also doing well exhibiting European movies in the Far East. When the quick Russian in-

vasion of Manchuria in 1945 put him out of business, Reisini took off for New York. There he got into the export business to the Far East, wool to the Far East, exchange to all corners, with his nine languages (including Chinese and Russian). Reisini has a highly developed eye for the chance. In 1954 he wrestled a 36-page contract from Cinerama to show the wide-screen travelogues abroad. Starting in London, he has since opened theaters in Europe, South America, and the Far East, is still adding to the list. (A specially built \$300,000 aluminum building will house his Cinerama showings at the Brussels World's Fair.)

Reisini now is dickering for a Victory ship to house an industrial-machinery exhibit below decks, Cinerama topside.



Reisini: Movies, mines, money

for pro-America propaganda-plus sales of the machinery. (Congress torpedoed a similar State Department scheme.) He also has big plans for the 500-acre asbestos deposit Robin has acquired in California, with blueprints ready for a 2,000-ton-a-day mill.

As for Collins & Aikman (which makes upholstery for customers like General Motors and Ford, along with the new "Lake huts"), Reisini is keeping his plans to himself. He says he considers the management "good" (despite its \$1.6 million loss for 1957) and has no ideas to advance "yet." But among men who know Reisini best, it's two to one that he will watch for what he calls "anemia of initiative." And if he finds any, his golden hypodermic will be ready.

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